

THURSDAY

a full-length play in one act

by

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CHARACTERS

[Total of six actors]

JACK	Miserable workaholic New York attorney with a sardonic wit. Mid-40's.
ROBIN	Jack's wife. 40ish.
DR. SWENSON	Jack's shrink. Late 30's.
ARTHUR	The nineteenth century German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer. Mid to late 50's.
GABE	Jack's son. 13ish.
DR. KREDITOR	Jack's hematologist-oncologist. Any age over 35.
CHLOE	Jack's opposing counsel. Voice only, by actor who plays Robin, with soft British or other British colonial accent. Early 30's.
WILSON	Jack's client, a good ole boy done good. Voice only, by actor who plays Arthur, Dr. Swenson or Dr. Kreditor.
PHIL	Managing Partner of Jack's law firm. Voice only, by actor who plays Arthur, Dr. Swenson or Dr. Kreditor.
BOB	Jack's GP. Voice only, by actor who plays Arthur or Dr. Swenson.

SETTING

A minimalist set capable of suggesting, at different times, the following six locations in Manhattan:

1. Jack's Wall Street law firm office
2. Dr. Kreditor's physician office
3. Jack's Upper East Side apartment, which may be simply a sofa
4. Dr. Swenson's shrink office
5. Jack's father's nursing home room, which may be simply a hospital bed at 75 degree angle with back facing the audience
6. A dive bar

TIME

One Thursday to the next, in the present.

SOME NOTES ON SCRIPT FORMATTING

The play is not divided into separate scenes, as a seamless flow is envisioned.

A backslash \ means the character with the next line should begin to cut off the character speaking at that point.

Language in brackets [] indicates that the line should be spoken in a different mode than the other lines, such as under the breath, as an aside, etc.

THURSDAY

Lights up on Jack's law office. It's Thursday afternoon. Jack is there alone behind his desk, on the speaker phone, stressfully and wearily negotiating a deal with opposing counsel, Chloe. Jack's client, Wilson, is selling a company to Chloe's client, Hollinger.

JACK

No no, that's not the... no no, would you... would y... would you just listen for a second!

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

(She has a soft British or other British colonial accent.)

You're raising your voice at me?

JACK

No no, of course not, I'm just a little... I'm just saying we're not caving on the earn-out, it was in the... It was in the letter of intent.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

As was the working capital adjustment.

JACK

That's different.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

It is?

Jack's other line starts to ring. Jack sees on the caller ID screen that it's Phil.

JACK

It is!

(Pause)

It is.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

How so?

JACK

Chloe Chloe...

Yes? CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

...could you hold a second... JACK

Sure. CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

...I gotta take this, I'm sorry. Thanks. JACK
 (He switches over to Phil on the speaker.)
 What's up, Phil, I'm in the middle of a \ negotiation.

It's Marie again. We can't keep having this, \ Jack. PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

What'd I do *this* time? JACK

It's the tone you use with her. PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

The \ "tone." JACK

We're talking about a pregnant employee here. PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

I don't use any "tone" with her. JACK

Just like you don't with me. PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

Phil... come on, buddy. JACK

Don't "buddy" me. We're tired of cleaning up your messes... PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

My "messes." JACK

PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

(Continuous)

...and I'm telling you – as the managing partner of this firm – at a certain point, we don't care how much business you bring in. We're at that point. You hear what I'm saying?

Pause.

JACK

This is \ bullshit.

PHIL (ON SPEAKER)

You better hear.

Dial tone. Jack gathers himself, then switches back to Chloe.

JACK

Sorry about that. Where were we?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

You were going to tell me why it's different.

JACK

Why it's... Oh yeah, right, okay. Okay, yeah, so Chloe?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Yes?

JACK

Listen to me.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

I'm \ listening.

JACK

Leaving the adjustment in there was... It was an oversight - a simple, honest... The earn-out was a negotiated business point. It's a completely different thing.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

They're both in the same document, under different headings. I'm sorry, but am I missing a nuance \ here?

JACK

It's different, Chloe, trust me...

(He notices a perturbing email. Hissed under his breath - Chloe does not hear this.)

[Oh, come on! \ What is it this time?]

JACK (CONT'D)

Jack starts typing and sending his response furiously throughout the following lines by Chloe and doesn't hear what she says.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

I don't know... I was really looking forward to working opposite you on this... learning from you... but... this is awfully peculiar... It simply doesn't... I think I need to run this by my client...

(Pause)

Hello?

JACK

What was that? I'm sorry, we got cut off there for a second.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

I think I need to run this by my client...

JACK

I suggest you \ do that...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

...before we move ahead any further.

JACK

Yes, I suggest you do that.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Do I detect a tone of condescension?

JACK

A "tone?" Of course not. What?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Are you sure? I could've sworn...

JACK

No, I promise. I think you're a talented young attorney.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

A talented *young* attorney?

JACK

No no. A talented attorney. Period. Very talented. For any age.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
You're not just patronizing me?

JACK
No, I mean it.
(Pause)
I mean it, Chloe, I swear.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
Thank you, then. Honestly. That means a lot to me.

JACK
No sweat. Now, when are you gonna get me that equity commitment?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
We sent it over.

JACK
(Checking his emails)
You did?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
We faxed it to you an hour ago.

JACK
You *faxed* it?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
That is correct.

JACK
To which number?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
Two five nine six.

JACK
[Marie...] Okay, I'll go pick it up after we get off.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
You don't have a secretary?

JACK
She's pregnant.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 She's on bed rest?

JACK
 No, she's here. She just... I'm having this... Don't worry about it, it's not your problem.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 So, like I said...

Jack's phone starts ringing. This distracts him, but he doesn't take the call.

CHLOE (CONT'D, ON SPEAKER)
 Hello? Do you need to take that?

JACK
 No no, that's okay. [Shit.]

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 Pardon me?

JACK
 Nothing. Just... go ahead.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 So, like I said...

JACK
 Right. You need to run it by Hollinger. Don't worry about it, that's definitely the right thing to do at this point.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 You think? Honestly? Off the record?

JACK
 (After sensing an opening)
 I wouldn't make a big to-do over it though... Raising people's blood pressure for no reason...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 The last thing I want to do is... you know, start waiving the "bad faith" flag and all that... I mean, against *\you* of all people.

JACK
 Hey, whoa-whoa, hey now, no no, slow down there \, listen to m...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 “Slow down \ there”?

JACK
 ...listen to me, Chloe: We have been acting in good faith. We will continue to act in good faith. Let’s get past this and on to the Dom Perignon at the closing dinner, all right?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 I’d like to.

JACK
 Let me know after you talk to Hollinger, I’ll be here. Okay?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)
 Cheers.

Dial tone. Jack sighs wearily, braces himself, picks up the receiver, dials the number for his client, Wilson, gets his assistant.

JACK
 Hey Tina, is he there?
 (Pause)
 Could you please transfer me to his cell?
 (Pause)
 No, I’m sorry... It doesn’t matter what he’s doing, we need to interrupt him...
 (Pause)
 You can... you can... you can blame it all on me. Blame it all on me, just get him on the line already!
 (Pause)
 I’m not yelling... I apologize... profusely, okay, but please? Tina? Please?
 (Pause)
 Thank you. I really app...

Jack sighs, suffers. Wilson, who is on the golf course, gets on the line. Wilson has a twang.

JACK (CONT’D)
 She’s not buying it, Wilson... Because... Because it was in the letter of intent which you agreed to and which you signed. It’s in there clear as... Where? Oh come on, we really have to go through this exercise?

(Pause)
 Can I put you on the speaker, I have to pull it up.

JACK (CONT'D)

(Jack presses the speaker button, searches on his computer.)

Can you hear me?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Unfortunately. [Go on and tee off, it's my fuckin' lawyer... Yeah, tell me about it.]

JACK

Okay, here it is. You have it in front of you?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

No.

JACK

No?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

I'm on the sixteenth tee. Where do you think I'd have it, in the ball washer?

JACK

That's fine. It's paragraph three \ on page two.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Jack? Jack?! You still there? \ Jack?!

JACK

I'm here.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

I thought we were breaking up for a second.

JACK

[I wish.]

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

What was that? Jack?!

JACK

Nothing.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Speak up son, I can't hear you!

JACK

I said, the title of the section is “Working Capital Adjustment.” Initial caps, all bold, underlined, in italics. Clear \ as day.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

[Nice ball, Jimmy boy! Whewie... look at that ball... Damn...] What’s it called, Jack?

JACK

Working. Capital. Adjustment.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

How’d that get in there?

JACK

How’d that... are you \ serious?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

I can’t agree to that.

JACK

You already did. You agreed to it, Wilson.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Hold a sec, I have to tee off.

(Pause)

[Shit. Ho ball... Ho ball! Oh don’t go in the... I hate this fuckin’ game.] Jack? Jack?!

JACK

Yes.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

It’s not legally binding though, right? You put all that shit in there to protect me, didn’t you? That’s why I pay you New York lawyers.

JACK

It’s not legally binding, but it’s the basis upon which Hollinger agreed to buy the company, which we negotiated for over a month. We can’t just pick and choose what we like in there now.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

What are you, my Rabbi?

JACK

I’m not your... I’m... I’m trying to be your *lawyer*, I just... This is gonna be a tough sell...

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

You're not scared of that chick lawyer, are you?

JACK

What? Are \ you...

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Did she question our good faith?

JACK

She did, as a matter of fact.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Why, that presumptuous little twat. [Fuck, I'm never gonna find it in this crap. I'm takin' a drop, okay?] You set her straight though? Jack, you there? Jack?!

JACK

She's putting the deal on hold until she talks to Hollinger.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Ah, that's just great. You didn't talk her out of that?

JACK

She has the right to talk to her client.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

The "right?" Why, that's very honorable of you. I've got too much ridin' on this, son! [I'm goin' with the five iron. Gotta get it over that branch... Huh-yeah... fat chance the way I'm hittin' it...] Jack?!

JACK

What would you like me to do?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Send her an email, copy everybody on it, tell her we're terribly sorry for the misunderstanding, but we can't agree to it, something like that, you know. Hold a sec, there's people behind us, I gotta hit.

(Pause)

[Cocksuckin' hell! Why do I even try to... Jimmy, throw me another one, would you? No, the Titleist... Thank you...] Jack?!

JACK

Yes?

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

So you gotta be like a good lover to her, gentle but firm.

JACK

She will not be happy to hear from me again before she talks to Hollinger, I'm \ telling you.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

“Happy”? Since when do we care if she’s “happy”? You pussy-whipped boy?

JACK

What? That \ is...

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Jack, I'm payin' you too much for you to be lettin' your little head do the thinkin' on this. Now come on son, let's fry the bitch.

JACK

You're the client.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

And don't you forget it. Let me know right away, okay?

(Pause)

You're sending it now, Jack? Jack?!

JACK

I have to write it first.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

Highest priority?

JACK

Sure.

WILSON (ON SPEAKER)

I look forward to hearin' the good news.

(Pause)

[Ah hell, now I'm slicin' it?! Where'd *that* come from?! Son of a...]

Jack hangs up, suffers, begins to type an email. Phone rings, Jack presses the speaker button. It's his GP, Bob.

JACK

Jack Burns.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Hey Jack. Bob Goldman.

JACK

(Still typing)

Hey Doc. Mind if I keep you on the speaker? I gotta get something out.

Pause.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Is your door closed?

JACK

(Stops typing.)

This is just about my numbers, right?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Your cholesterol numbers are beautiful, both the good and the bad. Even better than last time.

JACK

(Resumes typing.)

That Lipitor...

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

It's a wonder drug.

JACK

All praise is due.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

\ Jack...

JACK

Thanks for droppin' in Doc, I'll keep \ doin' the same ole...

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Jack...

JACK

(Stops typing.)

What, what is it?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Your immunoglobulins.

JACK

My...

Immunoglobulins.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

They're bad?

JACK

Low.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Low's bad?

JACK

They're... they're very low. I don't like this number.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

What are they again? I've never even...

JACK

Jack's other line starts ringing, four tones. He is annoyed and slightly distracted, but doesn't pick up.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

I-mmu-no-glob-u-lins... They're part of your immune system. \ I...

JACK

So when they're low, that's... not good?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

I'm sorry to have to put you through this, Jack, it was an accident.

JACK

What was \ an acc...

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

When I sent your blood to the lab, I accidentally checked that box. I would never ask them to look at your immunoglobulins.

JACK

But... I feel completely okay... So we can just forget about it?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

No, we can't.

JACK

Why not?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Now that we know what this number is, we can't ignore it. You need to follow up.

JACK

It could be a mistake, right? Those labs make mistakes all the time.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Not likely here.

Jack's other line starts ringing again, four tones. He is more distracted by it this time, but doesn't pick up.

BOB (CONT'D, ON SPEAKER)

I made them test two more samples before I bothered you with this. Same number each time. You need to follow up.

Pause.

JACK

Okay...

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

This afternoon. Tomorrow morning at the latest.

JACK

This af... At the... What are you... Do... Do I have some sort of... Could it be something *serious*?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

I don't know.

JACK

You don't *know*? Could it be something... *life threatening*?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

You need to follow up. Let me give you this guy's name. He's the best. \ It's...

JACK

Wait a minute. Please. I'm not good at this.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Who is?

JACK

What sort of life threatening thing are we talking about?

Jack's other line starts ringing again.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

I don't know. Something with your blood.

JACK

My blood?

(Reacting to the phone)

Godammit! Hold on, Bob, I'm sorry, I've gotta get rid of \ this person.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

No problem.

Jack puts Bob on hold, picks up receiver.
It's Marie.

JACK

What's going on with the phones? I'm on the other... (Pause) Please tell him I'm... I don't care, tell him I'm... Well, this call's important too! No, Marie, it's not a tone, I promise. Don't turn this into another...

(She hangs up. To himself)

[Shit! Fucking motherfucker! Fuck!]

(He pushes the speakerphone button.)

Okay Bob, what? I'm sorry.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

The bottom line is this thing's out of my league. You need to see this guy. You have a pen handy?

JACK

Go ahead.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

It's Yuri Kreditor.

JACK

Creditor?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Yes.

JACK

You're sending me to a guy named "doctor creditor"?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

The same spelling as creditor, but with a K.

JACK

That's even worse.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

His number is 212-684-2490.

JACK

684-290... What?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Two four nine oh.

JACK

Two four nine oh.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Right. He knows you're coming. I talked to him about this.

JACK

You did? [Oh god.] What'd he say?

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

That you need to see him. We're faxing him your report.

(Pause)

Go see him. Tomorrow at the latest. Promise?

JACK

Okay.

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

I'll make sure he keeps me in the loop.

JACK

In the...

BOB (ON SPEAKER)

Bye now.

Dial tone. Pause. Agony. Jack looks up the work number of his wife, Robin, and dials it on the speaker.

This is Robin?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Hey. It's me.

JACK

Pause.

Jack? Where'd you find my number?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Don't do this now, I have to \ talk to you...

JACK

I'm gonna have to \ call you...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

No!

JACK

I'm \ gonna...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

No! Please.

JACK

I'm on an \ important...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Bob Goldman called me.

JACK

So?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

He says I've...

JACK

I'm gonna \ have to...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

JACK

I might have something horrible... Like, the worst... I.... I just can't...

Pause.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Hold on...

(Classical "on hold" music while Robin gets off other call.)

I was on with the gallery. Now, *what?*

JACK

My... immunogoblins are low.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

I've never heard of that. What are they?

JACK

Immunogoblins. Or something like that. They're in your blood... part of the immune system...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

That sounds logical.

JACK

But... mine are really really low... And...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

It was just a routine cholesterol test, right?

JACK

He... checked the wrong box by accident.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

What an idiot. You need to get a new doctor. Did you Google "immunogoblins"?

JACK

I just got off \ with him.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

You need to do that.

JACK

I can't do those kind of things. Don't you realize that yet? You've been living with me twenty years.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 Hold on.
 (Sounds of authoritative keyboard clicking)
 You're such a... How do you spell it?

JACK
 I don't know, I didn't...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 Is it "immunoglobulins"?

JACK
 Yeah yeah, that's it. Is it there?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 There's lots on this.

JACK
 There is? [Oh God.] What does it say?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 I can't read it all now. But it looks like it has something to do with AIDS.

JACK
 AIDS? Really? That's what it has to do with?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 I'm not sure if that's the only thing, but it looks like it's the main thing.

JACK
 That's good then, right? I know I don't have AIDS. No way I have *that*, right?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 You're asking *me*?

JACK
 I wasn't... I didn't mean... Robin, please... Cut me some \ slack here...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 It's fine. I've really gotta \ get back to...

JACK
 Do you think I still need to see this guy he referred me to?

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)
 What kind of guy is it?

JACK

I was too scared to ask.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

That's...

JACK

Why do I need to see some my-shit-don't-stink specialist for no reason? I don't have AIDS. He'll probably think up some other B.S. to freak me out about. I *hate* these doctors. Fuck 'em all! Every \ single...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Jack. Take a deep breath, okay? Relax. You don't have AIDS. The whole thing is ridiculous. See the guy, get it over with, then find yourself a decent GP. Okay?

JACK

Okay. I'm sorry I... I'm \ such a...

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

It's fine. Okay?

JACK

Okay.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Okay.

Dial tone.

JACK

(To himself)

[Yes! Yes! Thank you. Thank you.]

(Laughs, finishes his email and sends it. To himself)

AIDS... AIDS my ass. Hunh.

Phone rings. Jack picks up the receiver. It's Wilson.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey Wilson.

(Pause)

I just sent it...

(Pause)

I had another call I had to... I just sent it.

(Pause)

JACK (CONT'D)

However long it takes an email to go through, I don't know.

(Pause)

We should give her at least a couple... Don't you think we should give her a couple of minutes to digest it?

(Pause. Big sigh.)

You're the client...

Lights fade on Jack's office. It's Friday morning. Jack goes to Dr. Kreditor's office. Dr. Kreditor gets out of his office chair and stands up to greet Jack.

DR. KREDITOR

(While shaking hands)

Mr. Burns?

JACK

Jack.

DR. KREDITOR

Yuri Kreditor.

JACK

That's one hell of a name for a "hematologist/oncologist."

DR. KREDITOR

(Chuckles)

It's Russian.

(Motioning to the chair in front of his desk)

Please.

JACK

Thank you.

They both sit, Dr. Kreditor back behind his desk.

DR. KREDITOR

It's good to meet you.

JACK

Same here but of course not really.

DR. KREDITOR

(Chuckles)

Sorry about the wait.

JACK

No sweat. It was a hoot.

(Dr. Kreditor chuckles.)

Great posters you got in here.

(They chuckle.)

I wouldn't think you'd be an AIDS doctor, but that shows you how much I know.

DR. KREDITOR

That would usually be an infectious diseases guy or an immunologist.

JACK

Then for you, it's a... like a sub-specialty?

DR. KREDITOR

Nah, I don't really deal with AIDS patients. At least at first.

JACK

But... Bob... He sent me to you...

DR. KREDITOR

(Picking up Jack's file, starting to look at it for the first time)

Something about... low immunoglobulins? Am I right?

JACK

That's what he told me. But I've got to tell you right off the bat, there is no chance I have AIDS. I mean, do what you have to do, but my lifestyle, the last twenty years at least... One woman... and that would be a female... And no [excuse my French] "back door action." Fortunately or unfortunately [how would I know], know what I'm sayin'?

DR. KREDITOR

(Chuckles)

But your immunoglobulins are low, right?

JACK

Apparently.

DR. KREDITOR

So if they're high, that could indicate HIV infection. If they're low... that's a different story.

JACK

Like... what kind of story?

DR. KREDITOR

Just... Why don't you relax for a second and let me read your report.

JACK

All right.

DR. KREDITOR

Do you want some coffee or a soda or something? I'll get Katya \ to...

JACK

No. That's okay. No thanks.

DR. KREDITOR

You sure? The kitchen's right \ around the...

JACK

Yes. Just go on and read the... I'm sorry, it's okay, thanks.

Dr. Kreditor begins to read the two page report intently. While reading the first page, he nods his head approvingly, as in "that looks perfectly fine," and he continues to do so for the first half of the second page. Then he does a major double-take when he reads the bottom part of the second page.

JACK (CONT'D)

What is it? Something's \ bad?

DR. KREDITOR

Hold on, hold on... hold...on...

Dr. Kreditor goes back to the first page and essentially repeats the same exercise, but faster, then ends with the same puzzled reaction.

JACK

What is it?!

DR. KREDITOR

(Still looking at the chart in disbelief)

They're low. Your immunoglobulins *are* low.

They are?

JACK

Very low.

DR. KREDITOR

How low could they be?

JACK

DR. KREDITOR
(Reaching across his desk, showing him the bottom of page two of the report)

Here, you see this chart? For the average healthy person, the normal range would be a high of 120,000 here and a low of 70,000 here. See that?

Okay.

JACK

DR. KREDITOR

See this? Yours are just a bit under 8,000. That's...whew... that is low...

JACK

[Oh man...] Am I fucked?
(Dr. Kreditor chuckles.)

I'm sorry, \ but...

DR. KREDITOR

I \ completely...

JACK

...sometimes no other word will do.

DR. KREDITOR

I understand, believe me.

JACK

Jesus. How many times a week do you have to tell people they're fucked?

DR. KREDITOR

Depends on the week. I even get on a lucky streak every now and then.

JACK

I don't know how you...

DR. KREDITOR

Don't get carried away. It's just a job, most the time.

JACK

So, am I?

DR. KREDITOR

We don't know yet.

JACK

[Oh Jesus.]

DR. KREDITOR

Let's back up a second. Do you feel sick?

JACK

You bet your ass I do.

DR. KREDITOR

(Chuckles)

I mean physically.

JACK

Not really. That's a good sign, right?

DR. KREDITOR

Sure. Most people who have the things we'll be screening *you* for... when they walk in this office the first time... they don't look like you do. They're sick. Visibly ill.

(Looking back at chart, troubled)

But... \ this...

JACK

What sort of things will you be... screening me for no don't...

(Pause)

Yeah no... Yeah... Just go on and get it over with.

DR. KREDITOR

Hmmm. There's really only two pathologies I can think of that could make your number this low. That doesn't mean you have one of them. You should keep that in mind.

JACK

Sure. I understand.

DR. KREDITOR

So the first would be non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

JACK

Oh fucking Christ, I am so fucked.

DR. KREDITOR

Maybe we shouldn't go through this \ now.

JACK

They can do things for that one, right? It's not just bend over and kiss your butt goodbye anymore with that one, right?

DR. KREDITOR

There... would be some things we could try, sure.

(Pause)

Although...

JACK

What?

DR. KREDITOR

Let's not focus too much on that one because I think, if you had that one... with your number this low... you'd be, you know, pretty far along at this point.

JACK

[Oh man.]

DR. KREDITOR

So if we are dealing with a pathology -- and remember, we don't know that to be the case -- it's much more likely to be the other one.

JACK

Which is? Go ahead. Just...

DR. KREDITOR

Multiple myeloma.

Pause.

JACK

Lots of pesky little myelomas swimming around in there, eh?

DR. KREDITOR

It's a cancer of the bone marrow.

Pause.

JACK

[Okay...]

DR. KREDITOR

We don't know that you have it. Please keep that \ in mind.

JACK

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma never looked so good to me. I would kill for that one right now.

(Dr. Kreditor chuckles.)

Hey, you know what though?

DR. KREDITOR

Unh unh.

JACK

If I do have it, we caught it really early, right? I mean, if Bob hadn't checked that box, we wouldn't even know about it. It would have to be the earliest this thing was ever caught - - an all time record, right? We'd hit it hard with aggressive treatments before it even got started. NIH and all that? That's good, right? Please say "right"?

DR. KREDITOR

You don't want this one.

JACK

(Deep sigh.)

What are the chances?

DR. KREDITOR

The problem here is, we hardly ever check immunoglobulins on purpose.

(Pointing to the report)

So this "normal range"? It may or may not be so accurate. There could be thousands of healthy people walking around right now with a count this low... or there could be none. Which means... we're sort of in uncharted waters with you.

JACK

I'm the Magellan of multiple myeloma?

(Dr. Kreditor chuckles.)

That's just dandy.

DR. KREDITOR

Let's take the approach that we're going to find out that you don't have it.

JACK

How do we find out?

DR. KREDITOR

We'll take some more blood... the results will be pretty conclusive one way or the other.

JACK

That's comforting. When do we get the results?

DR. KREDITOR

Thursday.

JACK

Thursday?! It takes a whole week?

DR. KREDITOR

This isn't run-of-the-mill lab work.

JACK

How'm I gonna... Can't you just... take me out back and shoot me right now?

Dr. Kreditor chuckles, exits. Lights out on Dr. Kreditor's office and up on Arthur.

ARTHUR

And you thought you were so smart, you impudent little shit.

JACK

Huh?!

ARTHUR

Look at Jack... All grown up... Went and became a fancy lawyer... Worked himself to the bone... Made partner... Got himself a wife... Got himself a son... His pride and joy.

JACK

Okay, now you've gone too far!

ARTHUR

I am simply taking an inventory of all your... "achievements" since we last met.

JACK

You made your point. Now get out of here. I've got enough to deal with.

ARTHUR

How so? What the hematologist/oncologist tells you on Thursday does not matter one way or the other. Remember?

JACK

[Oh man...] What I would give to believe that.

ARTHUR

I never asked you to “believe” anything. I want you to *know* it - not because you wish to “believe” it, but because you *know* it in your mind and heart: Your fate does not matter one bit, not for one second.

JACK

I remember that’s where you ended up, I’m just a little fuzzy how you got there. It’s been a while.

ARTHUR

Then let us reacquaint you.

JACK

That would mean... everything I’ve busted my balls for all these years...

ARTHUR

Yes, well, you never should have thrown me out the window the first time around. Brushing the eternal questions under the rug does not make them go away. It just means you will have to face them again one day... under duress.

JACK

What makes you think your medicine’ll go down any easier now?

ARTHUR

You were young then... “Hopeful of the future,” “falling in love,” and so forth. But this time, you have been fumbling through the night long enough. You are ready to embrace the dawn... Now more than ever.

JACK

The “dawn”? That’s what you call it?

ARTHUR

Relatively speaking, yes.

JACK

You know what I remember most about you, Arthur?

ARTHUR

My muscular prose? Rigorous methodology? My metaphysics...? The aesthetics?

JACK

You were a fucking bummer, man. Reading you was like dropping forty Quaaludes.

ARTHUR

Yet read me you did. Ferociously.

JACK

I must have been some kind of pervert, to put myself through that.

ARTHUR

It was worse than what you put yourself through now? On your average day? Than what you just put yourself through in that hematologist-oncologist's office?

(Jack flips him the bird, turns away from him.)

The dawn looms, Jack, just over the horizon.

Lights down on Arthur. It's early Friday evening. Lights up on Jack's father's nursing home room. Jack goes to the bed, sits on a chair to the side of it, facing the audience and acts as if he is tending to his father, straightening up the sheets, pillow, wiping his brow with a washcloth, etc.

JACK

Now, out of the blue, he's backing out on the working capital adjustment. I kid you not, Bernie. It was in the letter of intent, clear as day. We agreed to it. He was just waiting till they got far enough down the road where they couldn't back out.

(Pause)

He may be my meal ticket, but he's also a slime ball. This chick lawyer's gonna wanna cut my nuts off. She's suspicious, but she doesn't see what's coming. Know why? Yeah, she's green all right, but she also looks up to me... Imagine that...

(Pause)

In any event...

(Pause)

This morning...

(Pause)

I went to this... guy... and...

(Long pause. Sigh.)

You're already sick of looking at me, aren't you.

Lights down on the nursing home room, up on Jack's office. It's Saturday. Jack goes to his office, sits at his desk and works furiously at his computer for a while, then slowly passes out at his desk from exhaustion.

Lights down on Jack's office, up on home. It's Sunday evening. Robin is sitting on the sofa with her laptop. She reads and writes and sends emails intermittently throughout the dialogue. Jack goes to home, sits on the other side of the sofa, opens his briefcase and takes out some legal papers, tries to read them for a while, sighs loudly, throws them down.

JACK (CONT'D)

Have you Googled it yet? You promised me three days ago.

ROBIN

Have we seen you since then?

JACK

You Googled it, didn't you.

(Pause)

And?

ROBIN

I don't want to talk about it.

JACK

Because I'm fucked, just like I told you, right? You \ didn't believe me.

ROBIN

Because it's late and I've got a lot to do and there's nothing to talk about.

JACK

Nothing to talk about? How could \ you...

ROBIN

Jack. This happens to me all the time. A test gets screwed up and they have to do another test and I don't even bother anybody with it.

JACK

This is different.

ROBIN

Than ovarian cancer?

JACK

Huh?! \ Ovar...

ROBIN

Nothing. It turned out to be nothing. Like I'm sure \ this...

JACK

You didn't even tell me? When did \ you...

ROBIN

Jack. Take a deep breath.

JACK

Stop telling me \ to take a...

ROBIN

It's a test. You don't know that you have it yet. If you have it, we... you'll deal with it.

JACK

How would I "deal" with *that*?

ROBIN

Maybe you should go see that therapist Gabe saw last year. He might help you calm \ down.

JACK

I hate those guys. Fuck them.

ROBIN

This guy's different.

JACK

Really? How so?

ROBIN

I don't know... It's almost like... he cares... not in that creepy way they usually have.

JACK

That's... odd. Where'd he go?

ROBIN

Columbia.

JACK

Hmm. I'm still not buyin' it.

ROBIN

All I know's he worked wonders with Gabe.

JACK
Really? How so?

ROBIN
You're not around enough to tell.

JACK
Enlighten me, then. Come on, I wanna know.

ROBIN
His self-esteem... It's like night and day.

JACK
Hmmm...\ interesting...

ROBIN
Please don't start this tonight.

JACK
No, I'm curious. What aspect of himself does he feel so good about?

ROBIN
Fuck. You.

JACK
He's my son. I have a right to know this.

ROBIN
A child has to start somewhere. To build self-esteem. How can he do that if he's made to think he's worthless?

JACK
Seems kind of circular, doesn't it? Trying to talk him into feeling good about himself so he can feel good about himself?

ROBIN
(Returning to her laptop)
Don't see the guy then. I'm sorry I brought it up.

Enter Gabe, with a jacket on.

GABE
What about me?

ROBIN
Oh, your father had \ this...

No! It's nothing, Gabe. JACK

Why can't \ he... ROBIN

It's a private matter. JACK

What? GABE

He's not like you. (To Jack) ROBIN

What happened to him? (To Robin) GABE

It's nothing, honey, don't worry about it. ROBIN

I'm going to Leo's. GABE

At ten o'clock on a Sunday night, I don't think so. ROBIN

Just till eleven? Please? I did all my homework. GABE

Ten thirty. ROBIN

Come on, Mom. Please? GABE

Ten forty-five. ROBIN

At that point, what difference would another fifteen minutes make? GABE

Nice maneuver, kid.

JACK

Huh?

GABE

That was \ slick.

JACK

ROBIN
(Grabbing a cell phone and holding it out to Gabe)
Ten forty-five. Take this with you this time, so when you're late I can yell at you.

Gabe takes the cell phone and bends over to give Robin a quick, warm embrace and kiss.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Mmmmmuh! Keep it on and don't lose it.

GABE

I won't.

JACK
(To Gabe)
What are you and Leo gonna do anyway, play a video game?

GABE
(Simultaneously with Robin below)
What's it to you?

ROBIN

Jack...

JACK
No hidden agenda. I wanna know, that's all.

GABE

Why?

JACK
You're my son. Tell me already.

GABE
He hates video games.

JACK

What're you gonna do then, get high and jerk off to a Playboy?

Gabe chuckles guiltily.

ROBIN

Jack!

JACK

(To Robin)

That's what *we* did.

ROBIN

Uch.

(To Gabe)

Ten forty-five or else.

GABE

Okay.

Exit Gabe.

JACK

Right when we were about to roast the marshmallows...

ROBIN

I know you're freaked out, but you can't just get chummy on him all the sudden out of nowhere. You really need to take a deep breath.

JACK

I don't wanna take a deep breath and you can't make me.

Robin sighs, returns to her laptop. Jack paces, broods and fidgets for a long while.

JACK (CONT'D)

You wouldn't have that dip-shit's phone number handy, would you?

ROBIN

The therapist?

(Pause)

Not if you ask like that.

JACK

(Long sigh)

Forget it. I'd run circles around him anyway.

I'll email it to you.

ROBIN

Lights down on home. Exit Robin. Jack starts towards Dr. Swenson's office. Enter Arthur, looking intently at Jack. Jack notices him, hesitates, then continues.

Lights up on Dr. Swenson's office. It's Tuesday evening. Dr. Swenson is sitting in a contemporary office chair with wheels. His baggy shirtsleeves are haphazardly rolled up and his tie is down. It has been a long day. Jack sits on a low-sitting couch or comfortable chair across from Dr. Swenson. Dr. Swenson wheels his office chair across the space over close to where Jack is sitting, hovers over Jack, gives Jack his undivided attention.

JACK

So that's it... In two days, sometime on Thursday I don't know when, doctor creditor with a K's gonna call me and tell me I'm fucked or not fucked.

DR. SWENSON

Holy Christ! That's horrible!

JACK

Really? You think so?

DR. SWENSON

Whadaya mean? Bone marrow cancer?! Holy... Of course I think so. I'd be worse off than you, my friend. Bone marrow cancer?! Who wouldn't think so?

JACK

Well, my wife seems to think I'm being a baby about it and you're only the second person I've told. And I'm not even sure you count, since you're a shrink.

DR. SWENSON

You've gone four days without telling anybody else?

JACK

Yep.

Are your parents alive?

DR. SWENSON

My Dad, but... very frail.

JACK

[I'm sorry.] Brothers? Sisters?

DR. SWENSON

None... for all practical purposes.

JACK

Pause.

DR. SWENSON

We can always come back to that one. What about your pals?

JACK

That... hasn't exactly been in my wheelhouse in recent years...

DR. SWENSON

Your colleagues? They care about you.

JACK

About the fees I bring in, sure. But... they're tired of cleaning up my messes.

DR. SWENSON

How so?

JACK

I have these... "tone" issues.

Pause.

DR. SWENSON

Okay, we can always come back to that one, I'm sure there's some progress we can make there.

(Pause)

Gabe doesn't know.

JACK

No. Definitely not.

DR. SWENSON

Phew. That's good.

JACK
Yeah.

DR. SWENSON
No reason to...

JACK
I agree. Completely.

DR. SWENSON
He's a good kid. You must be really proud.

JACK
(Pause. Jack completely breaks down.)
I'm sorry... I haven't done this since...

DR. SWENSON
(While expertly rolling over to his desk, grabbing the tissue box, rolling back, offering Jack a tissue)
Hey, what are you sorry about? This sucks, man. This really sucks. *Four days...* What'd ya do this weekend? Catch a game or a movie or somethin'?

JACK
(Composing himself gradually)
Worked.

DR. SWENSON
Worked? That's what you did?

JACK
The concept of a "weekend" isn't applicable to my life.

DR. SWENSON
Yeah, but this thing here is... What'd ya work on, that was so important?

JACK
A reverse triangular merger.

DR. SWENSON
Ah hah...

JACK
This deal has permanently attached electrodes to my testicles... Not that that distinguishes it from the others.

DR. SWENSON
Oh *yeah*... Big shot lawyer, right?

JACK
I hate it.

DR. SWENSON
Really?

JACK
Scout's honor.

DR. SWENSON
Come on, there must be something about it you like, to be doing it this long.

JACK
I detest every inch and fiber of everything about it to the core of my absurdly unhappy being.

DR. SWENSON
Then why do you... You know what, let's table this one for now.

JACK
That's okay, it's not complicated. It's all about trying to meet expectations.

DR. SWENSON
Whose?

JACK
The family I started out with... The family I ended up with.

DR. SWENSON
Your wife... She works hard too, right?

JACK
Oh yes. Doesn't bring in a dime, but she's "fulfilled." "Bettering the community."

DR. SWENSON
We should table this one for now.

JACK
I agree. Too depressing. Let's talk about bone marrow cancer.
(They chuckle.)
What *do* we do about Thursday, Doc?

DR. SWENSON

Well, I happen to know a thing or two about managing anxiety...

JACK

“Managing anxiety.”

DR. SWENSON

Yep.

JACK

I’m all ears.

DR. SWENSON

Hmm... My five point plan... for you... right now at least... I’m not sure how helpful that’s gonna be.

JACK

Humor me.

DR. SWENSON

Well, for example, the first thing I have my patients drill down on, when they’re feeling anxious about something, is “What is the absolute worst thing that could possibly happen here?”

(They chuckle.)

See what I’m sayin’?

JACK

Moving right along to the second thing to drill down on?

DR. SWENSON

Yeah... so... the other four sort of work off that first one. That first one’s sort of like the... foundation for the whole program.

JACK

Ah ha.

DR. SWENSON

Yeah, so...

(Pause)

This deal you’re working on... does that help take your mind off Thursday?

JACK

[Nice segue.]

DR. SWENSON

[I try.]

JACK

The way it works is... It's kind of fucked up when I think about it, actually...

DR. SWENSON

How does it work?

JACK

When the sheer agony of the deal gets to the point of being unbearable [which is pretty much all the time], I think about... Thursday... and then I get this big... wave of nausea... which I just did...

DR. SWENSON

So did I, my friend. So did I. But go ahead... Go on... What happens after the wave?

JACK

It's funny... It's sad, I guess...

DR. SWENSON

What is? Go on.

JACK

I'm just like...

DR. SWENSON

Tell me.

JACK

How could that be?

DR. SWENSON

What?

JACK

How could I be such a miserable, pathetic fuck... You still have no idea...

DR. SWENSON

Enlighten me. I'm listening.

JACK

Do you know how often I think about blowing my brains out? Maybe that'll give you a feel for the ballpark we're in.

DR. SWENSON

Tell me.

JACK

I'd say several times a day on average.

DR. SWENSON

That's too bad.

JACK

But I'm such a wuss, I'd never have the balls to actually do that [not to mention the fact that I'm scared of guns...] so, all the time - in the shower, tossing and turning at three in the morning, sweating like a pig on some overrated beach, wherever, it doesn't matter - I'm like, "Hey God: *Dude*. Please. Just take me. Just take me and put me out of my misery once and for all. Send me to the ninth circle of hell, I don't care. Just please do that one simple favor for me, that's all I ask of you, you sick sadistic bastard." But he never listens to me... for some reason.

DR. SWENSON

I \ see.

JACK

Except! Except... Maybe. This time. Maybe this time he might... He very well might. So then, whadaya think this douche bag you're wasting your time on's thinking now?

DR. SWENSON

I'm not sold on the douche bag part quite yet, but go ahead. Shoot.

JACK

Now, I'm thinkin', "Please God, let me just not have this thing doctor creditor with a K thinks I might have and I'll be happy as a slug in his own slime being a miserable lawyer with no love in my life for the rest of my life. I would take that deal in a heartbeat. I'm sorry I called you a sick sadistic bastard.

(Dr. Swenson chuckles.)

I'll never do that again if you'd grant this one simple wish, I promise." How lame is that? What's wrong with me?

DR. SWENSON

Are you religious?

JACK

Not in the least. Why?

DR. SWENSON

Ya keep talkin' to God all the time... like you're having this ongoing conversation with him. Sometimes he's your best pal, sometimes not so much. Ever notice that?

JACK

I never did, actually... God...

DR. SWENSON

You know, a little old time religion might not be such a bad thing right now.

JACK

Oh, trust me, I know that – the mindless sheep can deal with this stuff better, with all that B.S. they buy into... But, I'm in the worst kind of foxhole right now... So... Oh well.

(Pause)

Hey, you didn't answer my question. You tryin' to weasel out of it?

DR. SWENSON

It wasn't all that straightforward. Could you maybe... consolidate it a little bit for me?

JACK

Fair enough.

(He thinks hard for a while.)

Okay, here goes: My question to you is, how come I've always wanted nothing more than to die..., but now... that I really might die, I want nothing more than to live?

DR. SWENSON

Sheez.

JACK

Good one, eh?

DR. SWENSON

Not bad. Hmm...

(He thinks hard for a while.)

I think the answer has to be... there must be a flaw in one of your two premises there.

JACK

How's that?

DR. SWENSON

It must be: Either you never truly wanted to die, even though you like to think you did, or, now, you don't truly want to live.

JACK

Did you do philosophy somewhere along the line?

DR. SWENSON

[A little bit.] It has to be one or the other. Which do you think it is?

JACK

I don't know... They both feel pretty solid when they're happening.

DR. SWENSON

Mind if I take a stab at it?

JACK

Be my guest.

DR. SWENSON

Okay. No doubt, you've got a bit of a dark twist to you, you've got some "issues" [who doesn't?], everything's not perfect. But, listen to yourself... You're gonna find out in two days if you have bone marrow cancer for Christ's sake, and yet still, with all that... you're funny, \ you're...

JACK

That's just a defense mechanism.

DR. SWENSON

You don't have the credentials to make that determination, my friend. Now, I'm in charge here and I'm in the process of giving you a qualified compliment and you're gonna have to take it, whether you like it or not.

(Jack chuckles.)

You're personable, you're even laughing... It really hurts me to tell you this, but my first impression is that you're a pretty good guy for a lawyer.

(Jack chuckles.)

And you are full of life despite your protests. And love. Yes. Love. I can tell you love Gabe, even if you don't show it to him so much.

JACK

How do you know that?

DR. SWENSON

I can't go any further with that one. Doctor-patient privilege, know what I'm sayin'?

JACK

I meant, how do you know how I feel about him?

DR. SWENSON

Other than that he's your child... Okay, for starters, the way you reacted before, the first time I brought his name up?

JACK

There's other reasons for people to cry, you know.

(Pause)

You think we should table this one too?

DR. SWENSON

I suppose so, counselor.

DR. SWENSON (CONT'D)

(Pause)

Does anything help take your mind off Thursday?

JACK

(After thinking on it a bit)

I'd say the closest thing is music.

DR. SWENSON

Oh yeah? Music... That's good. Whadaya listen to?

JACK

You know... Coltrane... Bartok... Phish... along those lines.

DR. SWENSON

You keep listening to that, you hear?

(Pause)

Tell me more about Dad.

JACK

Bernie? He's in a home. Had some strokes. His mind seems fine, but... the rest of him...

DR. SWENSON

Hmmm.

JACK

He can't talk...

DR. SWENSON

When's the last time you told him you loved him?

JACK

I'd say... around the same time I stopped beating my wife?

(They chuckle.)

You're persistent, I'll give you that.

DR. SWENSON

You've never told your own father you love him?

JACK

To be honest, it never crossed my mind.

DR. SWENSON

I think that might be very therapeutic for you - to get that off your chest. It's pretty astounding... what the studies show.

JACK

But I tend to tell the truth when I'm not wearing my lawyer hat.

DR. SWENSON

Maybe you have some unresolved conflicts there [who doesn't], but why hold on to that at this point? What good's it doing anybody? Where's this home he's at?

JACK

Across the Park.

DR. SWENSON

Hmmm....

JACK

I'll take it under consideration, that's all I can promise.

DR. SWENSON

That's all I can ask.

(Pause)

Want me to write something for you?

JACK

Nah, that's okay, the only drugs that ever made me feel better were the illegal ones.

DR. SWENSON

(Chuckles)

You sure? We've done a lot of catching up on the legal side.

JACK

Nah, I'll pass.

DR. SWENSON

You call me if you change your mind.

(They both rise and shake hands.)

And let me know how everything goes on Thursday, okay? I really mean that.

JACK

If you insist.

DR. SWENSON

And keep an open mind about Gabe, you hear?

JACK

I'll try.

DR. SWENSON

And think about why that'd be something you'd have to "try" to do.

JACK

Huh? You give out too much homework.

DR. SWENSON

Just do me a favor and think about that one.

Lights down on Dr. Swenson's office, up on Jack's office. Jack starts going to his office, stops, takes out his cell phone and calls Chloe.

JACK

Hey Chloe, it's Jack.

(Pause)

Yeah, no, I haven't looked at it yet, something came up with the family.

(Pause. Chuckling)

Yes, I do have one, believe it or not.

(Pause)

Everything's fine, it's just something I have to take care of. When are you guys gonna make a proposal, anyway? Wilson's not doing the deal with a working capital adjustment, that's not gonna change.

(Pause)

So what? We all swallow tough pills along the line... I'm *not*, it's just that it hurts me to see you take this so personally. All it is is rich people's play-money, you can't lose sight of that, ever.

(Pause)

Because... I... I think very highly of you, Chloe...

(Pause)

Yes, as an M&A attorney... But also, because of that accent of yours. You should have to register that thing, it's not even fair.

(Pause. Chuckling)

No sweat. I'll look it over and call you in the morning.

(Pause)

You too. Have a good one.

Lights down on Jack's office, up on his father's nursing home room. It's a little later that Tuesday evening. Jack goes to the bed, sits on a chair to the side of it, looks at his father.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey Bernie. Twice in one week, eh? Lucky you. In any event...

There is a very long, uncomfortable silence.

JACK (CONT'D)

You're already sick of looking at me, aren't you.

Lights down on nursing home room. Jack starts towards home. Enter Arthur, looking intently at Jack. Jack notices him, hesitates, then continues.

Lights up on home. It's a little later that Tuesday evening. Robin is on the sofa with her laptop, taking the occasional bite of home-delivered restaurant food from a plastic container. Gabe is also on the sofa, also taking an occasional bite from his plastic container, listening to an iPod, but also intently studying the textbook open in front of him. Jack enters their space.

JACK (CONT'D)

Guess who's coming to dinner!

GABE

Dad?

ROBIN

You should've told us, we already ordered.

JACK

That's okay, I'm not hungry.

(Jack approaches Gabe, kisses him on the head to Gabe's surprise. Jack sits down next to him.)

Hey buddy, whatcha listening to? "Doctor" somebody?

(To Robin)

That's all I need tonight, eh? Another doctor?

ROBIN

He's got an exam tomorrow.

JACK

(To Gabe)

So, who is it already?

Huh?!

GABE

Take your earphones out, would ya?

JACK

He's studying.

ROBIN
(Simultaneously with Gabe below)

What?!

GABE

Take out your earphones?!

JACK

Why?!

GABE

I want to talk to you, that's why!

JACK

Why?

GABE
(Taking earphones out)

He's trying to concentrate.

ROBIN

I'd like to talk to my son for a second please.

JACK
(To Robin)
(To Gabe)

What are you listening to?

GABE

Just a group.

JACK

Is that their name, "Just a Group?"

GABE

Death Cab for Cutie.

JACK

Death Cab for Cutie? Hmm... Sounds like something I could relate to.

You'd hate them.

GABE

Don't be so sure. Could I have a listen?

JACK

I dunno. I need to study.

GABE

(To Gabe)

Why don't you go in your room, honey.

ROBIN

Okay.

GABE

Gabe gives Robin a quick warm hug and kiss, then exits.

(To Robin)

JACK

What the fuck?

ROBIN

He really needs to study.

JACK

With Death Cab for Cutie blasting through his brain?
(Robin returns to her laptop.)

No wonder \ he never gets...

ROBIN

Not tonight, Jack. Please?
(Pause)

Go order something before it's too late.

JACK

This may come as a shock to you, but I'm not that hungry.

ROBIN

You still need to eat something.

JACK

I'd rather talk.

To whom?

ROBIN

Jack stares at her for a long while, then she suddenly looks up.

Oh, d'ya mail that check?

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Huh?

JACK

Your life insurance premium?

(Jack looks at her hard.)

You didn't mail it, did you.

(Pause)

Either you did or you didn't.

JACK

I might have...

ROBIN
(Returning to her laptop)

Thank you.

JACK

How can you be this way?

ROBIN

I appreciate the awkward timing, okay? But that policy was about to lapse.

She continues to type for a while, with Jack looking at her.

JACK

Do we still have my philosophy books?

ROBIN

What?

JACK

From college?

ROBIN

That came out of nowhere.

JACK

In any event...

ROBIN

They'd be down in storage if they're anywhere. Want the key?

JACK

(Getting up, checking for his wallet)

Oh shit, that's right, I threw him out the window.

ROBIN

Excuse me?

JACK

Need anything at Barnes & Noble?

ROBIN

(Pause, as she thinks about it)

The new Contemporary Artist? With Dassoulas on the cover? If it's in?

JACK

I'll check.

ROBIN

Thanks.

Fade on home. Exit Robin. Lights up on Arthur, perhaps at a lectern or standing in front of a blackboard or chart with markers/chalk or a pointer. Arthur hands Jack a copy of his (Schopenhauer's) book, "The World as Will and Representation."

ARTHUR

All right, let us get down to business. There is only one thing in the whole universe that actually exists in and of itself, from which everything else, including you and... the former me, is a mere emanation, and we call that thing...

JACK

The "will."

ARTHUR

...for lack of a better term. And all that we perceive?

JACK

None of it's real - mere representations of the will.

ARTHUR

Except?

JACK

Our own bodies – when we feel them in that unique way... from the inside... especially when we... you know...

ARTHUR

Good. Und? What else?

JACK

Music. Sweet music.

ARTHUR

Yes... indeed...

JACK

Indeed.

ARTHUR

Anything worth listening to since 1860?

JACK

I don't want to rub it in.

ARTHUR

Oh, now you *must* tell me.

JACK

With what you think of as “music,” it's been a mixed bag, but some of it has been superb. More dissonant, takes a bit of getting used to, but... well worth the effort...

ARTHUR

What do you mean by “what I think of as music?”

JACK

There's these new sounds. They would knock your nineteenth century stockings off.

ARTHUR

Continue.

JACK

Bebop, Arthur... Bebop...

Oh?

ARTHUR

Complex, but simple... Tight, but loose.... Refined, but raw... And sexy.

JACK

A bit like myself, eh?

ARTHUR

They chuckle.

JACK

Man, I wish you could've heard it. And then... there's rock and roll, baby.

ARTHUR

"Roll" evolved from "rock"?

JACK

No, it's one thing – rock and roll.

ARTHUR

I see. Und?

JACK

Well... man... It's... very simple, very loose, very raw... and über-sexy.

ARTHUR

Sexier than Ode to Joy?

JACK

(After thinking on it a bit)

Nah, they got nothin' on Ludwig.

(They chuckle. Jack chokes up on the next words.)

But... it's extraordinary, Arthur...

Pause.

ARTHUR

We digress... And what is the nature of the "will?"

JACK

A seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness.

ARTHUR

And therefore of the world?

JACK

A seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness.

ARTHUR

And therefore of life?

JACK

A seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness.

ARTHUR

And therefore of *your* life?

JACK

A seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness.

ARTHUR

And when we die?

JACK

The same damn thing all over again. There's no hope for progress or escape, even in death.

ARTHUR

And therefore, the only thing that can be done about it?

JACK

Withdraw... from it all...

ARTHUR

Utterly...

JACK

Completely...

ARTHUR

To cease all wanting and striving...

JACK

Detach from all attachments... particularly to other people.

ARTHUR

And then, alas, the dawn.

JACK

I get it - I'm still not sure I buy it.

ARTHUR

You had better...

JACK

We'll see. Thank you, though, Arthur. You do have a delightful way with words.

Lights down on Arthur, up on home. Robin is sitting on the sofa, reading the new Contemporary Artist. Jack sits on the opposite end of the sofa, closes The World as Will and Representation.

JACK (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

ROBIN

Can it wait? I need to focus on this.

JACK

On a magazine?

(Pause)

Just one simple \ little question?

ROBIN

Jack, all that's happened is you had some blood taken.

JACK

It's not about that.

ROBIN

What then? Quickly.

JACK

Existence.

ROBIN

Existence.

JACK

Please? I beg of you, for old time's sake.

(Singing off-key, end of old Turtles tune)

"So happy together... So \ happy to..."

ROBIN

One simple little question about existence and that's it.

JACK

Do you think everything is just a seething cauldron of hideous, evil pointlessness?

ROBIN

Is that what that guy says?

JACK

Arthur? In a nutshell.

ROBIN

(After thinking on it a bit)

There's some truth in there somewhere, I guess.

JACK

There can't be "some truth in there somewhere." This isn't a Jackson Pollack. Either he's right or he's wrong.

ROBIN

Then he's wrong. There's the occasional person who manages to climb out of the sewer and do something noble... inspiring...

JACK

So you're a Nietzschean. I guess that makes sense.

ROBIN

I'm not an anything-"ean." As hard as those guys try, you can't reduce everything to a single explanation that fits together all neat and logical. It all depends on your perspective. Where you came from, where you're standing at the time. Like it sounds like Arthur must not have had much love in his life to come up with something that grim.

JACK

Ah, so you're more of a late Wittgensteinian.

ROBIN

Stop it right now. Please? I mean it.

JACK

Why? I think this is a reasonably engaging conversation.

ROBIN

That's why you need to stop. You're reminding me of a guy I could never get enough of.

JACK

Ooh.... That's very intriguing. Perhaps we should remind you of this fellow you once knew by, how shall we put this, employing a more corporeal methodology?

Are you hitting on me?

ROBIN

Good line, eh?

JACK

It has a certain blue-collar charm. How long you been working on it?

ROBIN

Just now baked it up for you, my pet.

JACK

Robin returns to her magazine.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on. What the hell? Sure, maybe you're more attracted to that roach crawling behind your head \ than...

ROBIN
(Jumping up, screaming)

What?! Where?! Where is it?!

JACK

Okay, maybe not a roach.

ROBIN

Oh... my God... Why did you do that?!

JACK

Cuz it makes my mouth water when you give me a peak at that scrumptious little crack in your armor.

ROBIN

That's gross.

JACK

Come on. How bad could it be? It's like pizza, right?

ROBIN

I'm not in the mood for pizza.

JACK

Well, I think I might be able to recall how to whet your... appetite. It'll be like riding a bicycle.

No. ROBIN

Why not? JACK

Just no. ROBIN

Why not? JACK

Why. Not. (Pause)

Because I already had pizza today. ROBIN

Long pause.

Come again? JACK

You heard me. ROBIN

Long pause.

What... kind of pizza are we talking about? Sausage? Mushroom? JACK

You can even make a joke about that. ROBIN

Wanna hear my new one about bone marrow cancer? JACK

(Pause)

So, what you're saying is... You are actually saying... You are saying you actually... You have actually.... You let another man... \ stick his ...

I was going to wait till after Thursday. ROBIN

You mean, if I found out I'm fucked on Thursday you would have said, "Honey, you think that's something, I've been getting fucked every day?" JACK

ROBIN

Of course not.

JACK

“Of course not”... because... what would be the point... I mean, why go through the hassle of telling a dead man you’re cheating on him.

ROBIN

I’m not “cheating” on you. For me to cheat on you, you’d have to be my husband.

JACK

We got divorced and you didn’t tell me? That’s a fine how do you do.

ROBIN

You know what I mean. I didn’t even think it would bother you.

JACK

Then why were you going to wait till after Thursday, if it wouldn’t bother me?

ROBIN

Because... it would bother me.

(She starts to cry.)

Shit... I hate you...

JACK

Wait... you... huh? Did I miss an interim step or something?

ROBIN

Everything’s not logical, Jack. Everything doesn’t follow all the time.

JACK

All the sudden you care about me again because I might die?

ROBIN

No, all the sudden you care about me again because you might die.

JACK

But we seem to have something going between us again. The kindling’s lit - we just need to throw a log on real quick.

ROBIN

What do you think I am, your *temp*? If you find out you’re fine on Thursday, it’d be like you woke up from a bad dream. “Ooh... what’s this...this *creature* weighing me down with its nasty head on my chest? Breathing on me... I’ve gotta go check my blackberry. Get to the office. Back to my deal.”

JACK

Wait a minute here. You're the one who's off humping somebody else while I bust \ my balls...

ROBIN

Morty and I don't "hump."

JACK

Morty? I've been taken out by a guy named Morty?

(Pause)

At least he's circumcised.

ROBIN

Very clever.

JACK

When was Morty born, anyway, three hundred B.C.? I'm sorry... I meant B.C.E.

ROBIN

Do not make fun of him for one more second. He's a warm and loving person.

JACK

Don't count your chickens. Even you were warm and loving once, Morticia.

ROBIN

I still am. I am to him, I am to Gabe – that's your son, by the way. I am to my work.

JACK

You mean your "avocation." Don't insult the word "work" with what you do. "Work" implies remuneration. "Work" implies suffering.

ROBIN

You really did forget, didn't you. Conveniently?

JACK

Apparently.

ROBIN

Our deal?

JACK

That I would toil away in the Lake of Fire eighteen hours a day while you hump Morty?

ROBIN

When you passed the bar... that I would quit my job and support young artists? That, between the two of us, we could do well *and* do good?

ROBIN (CONT'D)

(Pause)

It was all your idea, you could've taught philosophy.

JACK

Yeah, you and Bernie would have loved that one.

ROBIN

Don't you dare lump me with him. I would have been fine with it.

JACK

You say that \ now.

ROBIN

And I'm sure you also forgot how many times I begged you to slow down - but you couldn't afford the time to listen, you were so obsessed with doing something you hate so much. How do you think that makes Gabe and me feel, that you'd rather do something you detest than be around us?

JACK

All I am to you two is a life support system for a revenue stream.

ROBIN

You see yourself differently?

JACK

Some things are a matter of perspective, aren't they?

ROBIN

Yes, they \ are.

JACK

Because all this time, I've been doing this thing I detest for you guys, so you could have a good life. I was thinking you'd appreciate that. That's the way it used to be, you know? The hard-working self-sacrificing hubbie. Like Ward.

ROBIN

(After thinking on it a bit)

Clever?

JACK

Yeah. He was revered. Every night when he came home he was greeted with his slippers and his newspaper and his pipe and his prettied-up wife, a home cooked meal, adoring children in their pajamas with the little horsies on them and the rubber feet...

ROBIN

That guy came home at six in the evening, not one in the morning. That guy took the occasional time off to play ball with his son and took his family to church on Sunday and left work behind when he was on vacation.

JACK

It's harder than it used to be. I should be punished for that?

ROBIN

We'd be fine on a fourth of what you make.

JACK

I wanted you to be more than "fine."

ROBIN

We never asked for more.

JACK

But now that you have it, you've gotten plenty used to it.

ROBIN

It's our consolation prize.

JACK

And the whole time, you both were losing respect for me... both of you - Gabe striving to be the supreme moron, you striving to hump Morty.

ROBIN

Stop saying that.

JACK

"Hump Morty?"

ROBIN

About Gabe.

JACK

You're right, I'm sorry, I won't say "hump Morty" anymore. Why do you need my money anyway, now that you have his -- this Morty guy whom you hump?

ROBIN

You know the balance in his bank account?

JACK

I don't need to. Any guy named Morty is loaded by decree. It's in the Torah.

ROBIN

He doesn't have a bank account. His name is Christopher Morty. He was born in 1979... A.D. and he's a struggling sculptor. Dead broke.

Long pause.

JACK

Ah ha... I see... Okay... All right then... There we \ have it.

ROBIN

You should see his work, Jack.

JACK

“Work”? That word \ again.

ROBIN

If we hadn't been helping him out the last few months, he might have given up.

JACK

“We”? You're saying... Hold on... Our money? *My* money?

ROBIN

Why do you care? You don't get anything out \ of it.

JACK

Arthur said sculpture was the second lowest of all the arts. You wanna \ know why?

ROBIN

Stop calling Gabe names, you hear me? It's not fair -- you scar him, then blame him for being scarred.

JACK

He was born who he is, Robin. As were you.

ROBIN

More Arthur?

JACK

More truth.

ROBIN

It must have comforted him to conjure up such a convenient way to not have to take responsibility for his actions, to not have to try to improve himself or the world.

Enter Gabe, in boxers and old T-shirt.

GABE
Could you guys keep it down? I have an exam.

ROBIN
Of course, sweetie, I'm sorry.

JACK
What time is that fucking exam of yours anyway?

ROBIN
Jack!

GABE
Why do you care?

JACK
Just tell me already.

ROBIN
Leave him alone.

JACK
You stay out of this, you...

ROBIN
Don't you dare...

JACK
You...

GABE
What?

ROBIN
Don't... Please... Please...

GABE
What?!

JACK
(To Gabe)
Tell me right now. When is it?

GABE
After lunch.

JACK

Well then, guess what you're doing tomorrow morning.

GABE

I have no idea.

JACK

You're going to have a doctor's appointment.

GABE

Why?

JACK

Because you're not really going to have a doctor's appointment. You and I are going to the Park. And we are going to play ball.

GABE

Really?

ROBIN

That's ridiculous, I was \ just...

JACK

No! This is not a democracy. Or even a representative republic. I bring home the bacon here and I'm asserting my rightful place in my castle. Upon the throne. You are going to play hooky and we are going to go to the Park and play ball and we are going to have fun and we are going to bond!

Pause.

GABE

Really?

JACK

Would I shit you?

GABE

It's supposed to rain.

JACK

Then we'll get wet. And then you know what we're doing on Sunday?

ROBIN

Jack, that was \ just...

JACK

We're going to church, goddammit, that's what we're doing, end of discussion.

Pause.

GABE

Dad, we're Jewish.

JACK

You people wouldn't know a joke if it took a dump on your head.

ROBIN

Please stop this.

JACK

No. Gabe and I are playing ball tomorrow. Don't worry, I'm not making us go to Temple. We'll go to a museum. No, Jesus-god, not a museum either. I'll figure something out.

GABE

What's wrong with Dad?

Lights fade. Exit Robin and Gabe. Jack sits on the sofa, starts reading his book again. Lights up on Arthur.

ARTHUR

And what of "romantic love?"

JACK

It's just a trick. A practical joke played on each of us.

ARTHUR

By whom?

JACK

Nature... The species.

ARTHUR

Why?

JACK

To perpetuate itself perpetually... to no purpose.

ARTHUR

No one is spared?

JACK
Not even you...

ARTHUR
That is not... an appropriate \ line of....

JACK
What was it about her, Arthur? Your Caroline. That tormented you so... that could cause such a proud, disciplined man as you to betray your principles? To humiliate yourself time and again?

ARTHUR
This is taking us off \ track.

JACK
Was it her skin? How warm it was? The way it tasted?

ARTHUR
(After thinking on it)
The way it responded to my touch... every time...

JACK
Mmmm. What else? Her luscious hair? When you buried your face in it... and it weakened you... beckoning you to surrender...

ARTHUR
Like the sirens' song...

JACK
And her mouth...

ARTHUR
...and her ears... and that... place...
(Pointing to the place)
...you know, that succulent place where the neck meets the top of the shoulders...

JACK
Oh yeah... I love that place...

ARTHUR
...and her clavicles...

JACK
Nice clavicles?

ARTHUR

You should have seen them... They were perfect...

JACK

You adored her.

ARTHUR

It was just the species... dangling me like a child's toy... year after year...

JACK

Sounds awful.

ARTHUR

You are stronger than I was. You need not suffer the same fate.

Exit Arthur. Jack takes out his cell phone and dials Chloe at her office.

JACK

Hey Chloe, it's Jack.

(Pause)

No, everything's fine, it was no big deal, I took care of it.

(Pause)

Actually, it has nothing to do with the deal, I just wanted to ask you something off the record.

(Pause)

Don't be so paranoid, would you just let me ask the question?

(Pause)

Do you think everything is just a seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness?

(Pause)

It's not a joke, I want your opinion.

(Pause)

Because I'm starting to lean in that direction and I was hoping you could talk me out of it.

(Pause)

Yeah, okay, I see your point... No no, okay, you're right... I'm sorry... It was an innocent mistake, I promise you... Can we just forget it happened? I appreciate that. Okay, I'll look it over tonight and call you in the...

(Pause)

Actually, Chloe Chloe, hold on. It's gonna have to be in the afternoon, something came up.

(Pause)

No, I'm not playing games, something came up, I promise.

(Pause)

Okay... We'll talk then. Bye.

Jack gets up, finds an old football, starts playing with it, lies down on the sofa, falls asleep on his back, cradling the football on his chest. Lights dim on Jack.

Lights up on Jack. It's early Wednesday morning. Jack looks at his watch, gets up and goes to where Gabe exited and re-entered earlier.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ga-abe!! Hey Gabe! Get yourself up! It's ball time, buddy! And your old man is taking you down!

(Pause)

Come on, Gabe! Get your lazy ass out of that bed already, it's ball time!

Enter Robin, in nightgown or flimsy bathrobe.

ROBIN

He's at school.

JACK

(Looking at his watch)

It hasn't even started yet.

ROBIN

I sent him early.

JACK

Just to thwart me? You \ witch.

ROBIN

I'm not trying to thwart anything. It's great you want to throw a ball with him all the sudden. Just not on a school day in the pouring rain when he has an exam this afternoon.

JACK

So much for spontaneous good cheer.

(Pause. Long sigh.)

What're we gonna do, Robin?

ROBIN

We'll wait until tomorrow. Assuming you're fine, I'll have Louis call Sid.

JACK

Louis... You're using Louis? *Now* I'm offended.

I do what's necessary to look after my son.

ROBIN

Such as humping Morty.

JACK

A child deserves a mother who's happy.

ROBIN

He can't make you as happy as we were.

JACK

How do you know?

ROBIN

Because... of our shared history? Common heritage? Mutual values?

JACK

(She chuckles.)

See, that's why, Robin. He'll never make you laugh the way I can.

ROBIN

Could.

JACK

Can again. One hug? Come on, please? For old time's sake? In light of what I'm going through? In light of all I've done for you? In light of, shit, I don't know, all those other... compelling...

(She chuckles.)

I won't try anything, I promise.

ROBIN

You swear?

JACK

No crosses count.

ROBIN

Just one.

They hug. He buries his head in her hair for a while, then kisses her tenderly on the top of her head, then forehead, works his way slowly down her face, eventually finding her mouth for a long passionate kiss. As he

begins to work his way down to her neck,
she breaks it off.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You liar.

He begins to press forward again, while she
continues to resist him.

JACK

It's your fault. You know what you do to me when you smell like this.

ROBIN

Like what?

JACK

Like you.

ROBIN

Please!

JACK

(Pressing harder, aiming for her clavicles)

And those clavicles...

ROBIN

(Resisting)

What?

JACK

They're so....

She slaps him. They both are shocked.

ROBIN

Jack... I didn't mean that...

JACK

(While leaving the home space, not hearing Robin's next
line)

Could've fooled me.

ROBIN

Come back. Please?

Lights down on home. Exit Robin. Lights up on Arthur.

ARTHUR

Excellent going, my boy!

JACK

She's the one who did the slapping.

ARTHUR

She did give you a bit of a nudge, but it was in the right direction. Now, take charge and use that as a model for everything else you do. Detach detach detach.

JACK

It's not so easy, Arthur.

ARTHUR

I never said it was, but fortunately for you, you do not have much left to detach from... So go on and finish the job. None of it matters... None of them matter... The dawn is shining upon you at last.

Lights down on Arthur. Jack moves to the nursing home bed. It's Wednesday, late morning. He sits on a chair to the side of it, facing the audience and acts as if he is feeding Bernie some soup with a spoon, occasionally stopping to wipe his mouth.

JACK

I agree, Bernie. She does have a new radiance about her... a certain bounce in her step. Pole dancing class? No, I don't think so. Sure, yeah, the "not-for-profit" gallery's going great, but I don't think it's that either...

(Pause)

In any event... Dad... Bernie... I need to tell you something ... It's really important, even though it's not so easy to say... Okay, let's just get this over with... Here's what it is...

(Pause)

Dad... Robin's been shtupping some no-good shnorrer half her age. Can you believe that meshugass? And get this – he's a shaigitz. [Whoopsy-daisy. Don't eat the spoon.] His name has the word "Christ" in it, that's how I know. I finally know how Mom felt when she caught you tucking that little shiksa's ankles back on that antique mahogany desk of yours, know what I'm saying? [Settle down now, okay, you're making me spill it.] A schwartz? I didn't think of that, but I guess he could be African-American. You? A bigot? Hold on there, buster... Your whole life - you didn't eat on Yom Kippur, you only voted for Democrats, you watched basketball - how could you, of all people, possibly be a bigot? Don't be so hard on yourself. [Whoa, tiger, take it easy there.] My practice? I'd

JACK (CONT'D)

say I'm well beyond "practicing" these days, Bernie. You know how much I brought in last year? Take a wild guess. Try multiplying that by three, big guy. Yeah, that's right. How proud does that make you feel, that you and my beloved brother, Pete, were always the "lawyer's lawyers" in the family and I can't even stand it... yet, my numbers are leaving both of yours in the dust? [Keep it steady there, big guy.] How fuhkakta is it, that where it really counts, I mean, let's face it, I'm cleaning both your clocks.

(Jack puts the soup down, gets up and prepares to leave.)

Speaking of Pete, give my best to him if he ever bothers to bring his sorry ass by here.

(Jack flips the bird at Bernie.)

Give him a nice warm one of these for me.

Jack begins to leave the nursing home room, but then stops suddenly, looks back at Bernie.

JACK (CONT'D)

(Impressed and surprisingly exhilarated by what he just did)

Huh.... Hmmm...

Lights down on nursing home, up on Jack's office. It's Wednesday afternoon. Jack goes to his office, sits in his chair, dials Chloe on the speaker.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Chloe McFarland.

JACK

Hey.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Hey.

JACK

It looks fine to me, good job.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

"Good job"?

JACK

No, I \ didn't...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Just teasing. Thank you.

Jack's other line starts to ring. It's an important call, but he just chuckles and ignores it.

CHLOE (CONT'D, ON SPEAKER)

You still there?

JACK

Yeah, just add the Bermuda sub and it's done.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

No problem. You ready for our proposal?

JACK

Oh goody. This better be worth the wait.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

I'm sure you'll \ think so.

JACK

Wait, hold on, let me grab a pad. Okay... proceed.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

All right, so... congratulations are due... We're withdrawing our request for a working capital adjustment, even though \ it's in the...

JACK

Hold on there, cowgirl. You're caving on that?

Pause.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

My client wants this deal.

JACK

Yes, we know – you've been telegraphing that from a thousand miles away since day one...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

[What?]

JACK

(Continuous)

...but we already agreed to that point in the letter of intent. Paragraph three, page two, clear as day.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

We're willing to give you the benefit of the doubt.

JACK

Based on what?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Based on what you said, that it was an oversight and that you guys are acting in good faith.

JACK

(While loosening his tie)

Of course I said that. What else was I gonna say when we already agreed to it? I was lying to you, Chloe. That's what we do, right?

Pause.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

I don't know what angle you're playing now, but we want this deal and we're giving you this point.

JACK

Take it back, then. I'm the only one who's heard it on this side and I'm not letting you do it, no way no how.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Jack... are you \ okay?

JACK

Hey, I just got a great \ idea!

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

This is pretty straightforward stuff, we're giving on a business point, why are you \ doing this?

JACK

(While rolling up his sleeves)

No, listen, this'll be fun... We'll do a conference call with all four of us, and I'll sell Wilson down the river right in front of you guys. There'll be nothing he can do about it.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Are you out of your mind?

JACK

(His tie is off. While unbuttoning the first top couple of shirt buttons)

No, listen... He'll be disgraced, you'll be the hero in front of Hollinger, you'll make partner, and maybe one day you'll even be as happy as I am.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

He's your client.

JACK

(Rummaging through his old emails)

Yeah, and he's also gonna leave *your* client without enough cash to buy a postage stamp.

(While forwarding an email to Chloe)

Here it is... I just forwarded you an email where he told me as much.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Don't do that! What, are you trying to get me disbarred?

JACK

Hey hey...

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

["Hey hey"?]

JACK

(Continuous)

...calm down, settle down... *you're* not gonna get disbarred, *I'm* gonna get disbarred. You're just taking what the other side gives you, like any good lawyer. In fact, I'm afraid you're ethically obligated to run with it now that it's in your in-box. Oh well...

Pause.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Why are you doing this?

JACK

Because... I want to lick every inch of your body like it's a creamy vanilla Gellato with fresh mango.

Pause.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

That is not the slightest bit humorous.

JACK

It wasn't meant to be. Don't try to fight this, Chloe, the species has selected us.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Um... all right... This is getting more inappropriate by the second.

JACK

What's inappropriate about it? I'm a tenuously well-preserved middle-aged man, you're a marginally attractive younger woman who looks up to me for fuck knows what reason, your accent gives me the hardest boners I've had in years... It's the furthest thing from inappropriate I can think of.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

You have a sterling reputation. Why \ would you....

JACK

That reputation has worn out its welcome. There's a new kid on the block.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

You're married, right?

JACK

Eighteen years of unmitigated bliss.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Have you cheated before?

JACK

Not until you came along, pumpkin.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

You're making me physically ill.

JACK

Then we should do something to make you physically better, don't ya think?

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Please retract this. Take it all back. I'll \ forget...

JACK

Don't be such a party pooper, it'll be fun.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

You're passing the point of no return. I'm sure you know that. Why?

JACK

Because of the dawn.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

Pardon me?

JACK

The dawn. It's kickin' in, just like he said it would. You gotta try this shit, pumpkin.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER)

All right, that's it. I'm reporting you. To your firm and the bar.

Dial tone. Jack laughs, begins to stroll out of his office with the dial tone still on, but lights stay up on his office. Lights up on the dive bar, where sits Arthur at a table with two beers on it. Jack joins Arthur at the table. Lights dim on dive bar. Jack's office phone starts ringing, his voicemail message comes on. Jack and Arthur don't hear this.

JACK (PRE-RECORDED, ON SPEAKER)

You've reached Jack Burns. Please leave a short message with your name and number after the beep. If this is urgent, please press zero, then the pound sign, and ask to speak...

(Sigh)

...to my assistant, Marie Hazelton. Thank you.

After the beep:

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Hey... Where'd I find your number, eh? I know you're there... I'm really sorry about... you know... I'm not sure what you're planning to do for tomorrow, but... I need... I want to be with you then. I'd never... Could you just pick up?

(Pause)

Fine.

Click. Lights out on Jack's office, up on dive bar, where Jack and Arthur sit with beers. It's Thursday, midday. Jack is on the cell phone with Jenny from his bank, has his checkbook out.

JACK

Nope nope, Jenny, no problem. I wasn't waiting that long.

(Pause)

I need to stop payment on a check drawn on my account...

(Pause)

Whatever the charge is, it's fine.

(Pause, looking at his checkbook)

JACK (CONT'D)

It's check number...

(Another call comes in on his cell phone. It's Dr. Kreditor.)

I'm sorry, could you hold on one second, I've gotta get rid of this guy, I'll be right back... Thanks.

(He switches to the other line.)

Doctor creditor with a K! What's up, buddy?

(Pause)

Yeah, I don't work there anymore.

(Pause)

Yeah, I don't live there anymore.

(Pause)

Sort of a coincidence, but you know what, I'm on a really important call.

(Pause)

Oh yeah, it's Thursday! Right... I know, yeah I remember, but I just don't have time to talk now, sorry buddy... Be good.

(He switches back to Jenny.)

Hey Jenny? Okay, so it's check number 0458.

(Pause)

Right. Payable to Delaware Mutual Life Assurance Company.

(Pause)

No, Assurance with an "a". Exactly. It's not too late to stop payment, is it?

(Pause)

Phew, that's good. And if I wanted to go on and close out all my accounts, I don't need anybody else's signature, right? Good, I'll come by later?

(Pause)

Okay, tomorrow's fine.

(Pause)

No no, I'm not switching banks, I'm just giving it all away. Why, you want some?

(He and Arthur chuckle.)

To wounded war veterans.

(Pause)

No, I couldn't have done that myself, I'm scared of guns.

(Pause. Giving a nod to Arthur)

I'm no saint, it was just an idea a friend of mine gave me. Don't worry about me, I'll figure something out...

(Pause)

Great, thanks. Okay, see you tomorrow.

Jack lets out a huge sigh of relief, chuckles with Arthur. His cell rings again. He and Arthur see that it's Robin.

ARTHUR

Do not answer it.

JACK

It'll be fun. What the hell?

ARTHUR

She might confuse you. They do that.

JACK

(Answering the call on speaker)

You have no faith in me.

ROBIN (ON SPEAKER)

Jack? Please don't do this. I... I ache for you, Jack. I wish I didn't, but... I guess it is what it is... All right.

Click. Jack begins to fidget and brood for a bit, then gets up, prepares to leave.

ARTHUR

Do not let one enticing message erase all that you have accomplished. That was just the species talking, that was all it was.

JACK

You didn't let it stop you for a second, lover boy.

ARTHUR

I was not strong like you. I am your Moses.

JACK

I have a German Moses?

ARTHUR

I led you to the Promised Land, but I myself was forbidden entry. Why turn back now?

JACK

Relax, I've just got a score to settle.

Lights down on bar and Arthur, up on Dr. Swenson's office. It's Thursday, mid-afternoon. Jack goes to Dr. Swenson's office. Jack's shirttail is out. Dr. Swenson, who is in the middle of doing paperwork at his desk, is surprised and apprehensive, but stands up to greet Jack.

\ Jack?

DR. SWENSON

Hey Doc, mind if I...

JACK

Please do.

DR. SWENSON

You okay? You don't seem yourself.

JACK

Have you gotten the call?

DR. SWENSON

What call? *{Jack knows what call.}*

JACK

Okay. *{As in "Okay, we can play that game if you wish."}*

DR. SWENSON

Is there a problem I don't know about?

JACK

A "problem"? Your wife called me this morning - terribly terribly upset...

DR. SWENSON

Aw, that's touching...

JACK

Says you completely lost it.

(Jack reacts increasingly facetiously to the ensuing list.)
 Betrayed the confidence of your biggest client... Sexually harassed another lawyer...
 Then tried to push some sort of designer narcotic on her called "the dawn"... You didn't
 go home all last night or even have the courtesy to let your family know where you
 were...

JACK

Is that \ all?

DR. SWENSON

And you've completely ignored her attempts to get a hold of you.

JACK

Ooh, now that *is* serious.

DR. SWENSON

I don't get the joke here. This is big time flush your life down the toilet stuff.

JACK

My life? Down the toilet? Just as of now? Hold on... You're talkin' about *my life*?

DR. SWENSON

Don't you think you're jumping the gun here? You very well might not have this thing. If it's bad news, maybe that's a different conversation.

JACK

Why would that be?

DR. SWENSON

Come on.

JACK

This has nothing to do with today being Thursday.

DR. SWENSON

Of course \ it does.

JACK

But it does have everything to do with my old pal, Arthur.

DR. SWENSON

Who's he?

JACK

Schopenhauer. Heard \ of him?

DR. SWENSON

Schopenhauer? You're reading *Schopenhauer*?

JACK

Good stuff, don't you think?

DR. SWENSON

I think he's the last guy anyone like you should ever read or think about, particularly at a time like this. Holy \ Christ!

JACK

He solved our little puzzle for us... You know, the not wanting to live-not wanting to die thing?

DR. SWENSON

I distinctly remember solving that one to our mutual satisfaction \ on Tuesday.

JACK

The first problem is that you weren't looking at my predicament objectively. Because you're trying to "help me," you arrived at your conclusion in advance, which just happened to be by far the most optimistic one available.

DR. SWENSON

You're a mind \ reader now!

JACK

Then you backed into your rationale. Which, granted, was clever - and temporarily soothing - but ultimately flawed.

DR. SWENSON

How's that?

JACK

There *is* no conflict between the two premises: for me to be so miserable with my life that I want nothing more than to die and at the same time to be so afraid to die that I want nothing more than to live. Both things are equally unbearable to look at, if you don't blink: life for what *it* really is and death for what *it* really is.

DR. SWENSON

Um hmm.

JACK

My problem was that I thought that today I was going to find out whether I'm fucked or not fucked. What Arthur has clarified for me is that I'm fucked either way, so... what the fuck? Know what I'm saying?

DR. SWENSON

(While motioning for Jack to take a seat)

Um hmm.

JACK

(While gesturing that he would prefer not to take a seat)

I thought it was just a silly college phase I grew out of, but this time... I'm like, holy shit, this dude really has it figured out.

DR. SWENSON

He \ doesn't.

JACK

This dude digs right down to the marrow.

DR. SWENSON

He doesn't, Jack.

JACK

You *have* to \ say that.

DR. SWENSON

Didn't you notice the music flaw?

(Jack shrugs a "huh?")

The music flaw? In your pal's cockamamie system? I would have thought a big music buff like you would have picked up on that.

JACK

I loved what he said about music.

DR. SWENSON

The zenith of all the arts?

JACK

You got it.

DR. SWENSON

The only art that comes directly from the one eternal source of everything that exists?
The "will?"

JACK

Straight from it, no dilution. You're good, Doc.

DR. SWENSON

Uh huh. And, supposedly, we all come from this same "will," right?

JACK

Yes. Unfortunately.

DR. SWENSON

"Unfortunately," because the will is a bad thing. A horrible thing. An endless wanting, without purpose.

JACK

A seething caldron of hideous, evil pointlessness.

DR. SWENSON

Ya see, I don't get that part.

JACK

You don't *like* it.

DR. SWENSON

No, it never added up for me, despite my double-major in European philosophy. [That's right, you heard me.] If music is the only art that comes directly from the will and the will is such a horrible thing, how come music is so beautiful? Tell me, Jack. How could you and... and Arthur love music so much, if it comes from something so hideous and evil and pointless?

(Pause)

Good one, eh?

JACK

Not bad.

DR. SWENSON

So you can take that pal of yours \ and...

JACK

Hold on. Give me a shot at this.

DR. SWENSON

Why would you even want \ a shot at...

JACK

Just give me a second, all right!

DR. SWENSON

Take whatever you need.

Jack struggles.

DR. SWENSON

You doin' okay there, Jack?

(Jack continues to struggle.)

Jack?

JACK

It must be that there's a flaw in his premise.

DR. SWENSON

Right, yes, that's exactly what I'm saying! That "one source of everything that is" can't be so horrible as he says, if music comes directly from it. It must be beautiful too. Or at the very least a mixed bag, don't ya think?

JACK

I'm talking about his premise that music is beautiful to begin with.

DR. SWENSON

You can't deny that one.

JACK

Here's what it has to be: We and music come from the same thing -- we *are* the same thing when it gets right down to it. So, when we hear music, it's just like looking in the mirror - since we're all so narcissistic and vain, of course we think it's beautiful, because it reflects us - but every single note of it is really just as god-fucking-awful as we are. Arthur did have a music flaw, but his flaw was that he believed his own ears when he listened to it. So there.

DR. SWENSON

That's cute.

JACK

Thank you.

DR. SWENSON

It's also self-destructive.

JACK

Do I look self-destructive to you?

DR. SWENSON

You know what you've done.

JACK

Do I sound self-destructive to you?

DR. SWENSON

I'm gonna be honest with you, my friend, I think you've worked yourself into some sort of, well, "breakdown" has all sorts of negative connotations, but let's just say things have gotten to you a bit...

JACK

I \ see.

DR. SWENSON

...which is perfectly understandable and I'm sure it's just temporary. We'll deal with it, don't \ you worry...

JACK

No. You're wrong. I'm completely fine -- for the first time in my life. Arthur nailed it: If you just give up, and I mean really give up, and accept the utter futility of all endeavor and stop wanting things, such as life and death and money and recognition and love and sex and wishing your son wasn't such a douche bag... it's amazing how relaxed you become. You should try \ it.

DR. SWENSON

Why would you say that about your own son? Just to injure yourself?

JACK

I don't know... Cuz he's a douche bag?

DR. SWENSON

Let me tell you something about douche bags, my friend – I spend *far* too much time in this room alone with 'em on a daily basis. I know my douche bags. And Gabe ain't one of 'em. We made a lot of progress, him and me.

JACK

Oh please. Progress does not happen in this world, ever, plain and simple.

DR. SWENSON

You're overruled, counselor. This is what *I* do, not you. Or Arthur, for that matter. *I* see people make progress every day. Gabe made progress. And he's not a douche bag, and you know it.

JACK

Okay, you're right... he's a dip-shit.

Pause.

DR. SWENSON

That's very sad.

JACK

What so glum? I'm at peace... free of "anxiety"... I'm completely okay with... the "test results," whatever they might be. Wasn't that the goal when I came here? We knocked it down! Let's go celebrate, have some brewskies, watch some ball, get some *ass*... Come on, it'll be fun.

DR. SWENSON

Why do you need me?

JACK

For what?

DR. SWENSON

To celebrate with you.

JACK

I don't know... It was just a joke.

DR. SWENSON

Uh huh. And while we're on that point: since you've got it all so worked out, what are you doing *here* of all places? With a delusional optimist like me, of all people... without an appointment, no less.

JACK

You can bill me.

DR. SWENSON

I intend to. Now answer the question, counselor. Why are you here?

JACK

(After thinking on this a bit)

I guess I needed to brag to somebody.

DR. SWENSON

You needed to brag to somebody that you don't need anybody?

JACK

(After thinking on this a bit)

Of all the shrinks in the world, I had to get *you*.

DR. SWENSON

I think you've got some work to do there, mister smarty pants.

JACK

(Preparing to leave)

No, I just need to stick to my principles.

DR. SWENSON

His principles, Jack, not yours.

Exit Dr. Swenson. Lights down on Dr. Swenson's office, up on Arthur at the bar. Jack joins him.

ARTHUR

How could you step into that one?

JACK

It's been a long week, cut me some slack.

ARTHUR

You cannot afford those mistakes, Jack. It will suck you back into caring about your life and other people and all that nonsense.

JACK

(Pulling out a Schopenhauer book)

Why *did* I need to tell him, anyway?

ARTHUR

We are all porcupines in the desert on a bitter cold night. We only have each other to huddle against for warmth, but when we do... we find that the sting hurts even worse than the cold. Better to steer clear of each other and freeze to death.

JACK

Thanks for the clarification.

ARTHUR

Glad to oblige.

Long pause. Jack begins to fidget.

JACK

Now what?

ARTHUR

Huh?

JACK

Now what, Arthur? As in, what do I do now?

ARTHUR

Hmm... Maybe re-read my *Parerga and Paralipomena*? My treatise *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*?

JACK

My brain's fried from all this.

ARTHUR

Some Mozart perhaps?

JACK

Why would I listen to something that comes straight from the "will" when I'm trying to deny it?

ARTHUR

I see... A museum then?

(Jack shoots him an incredulous look.)

I withdraw the suggestion.

(Arthur thinks a bit more.)

Maybe you should meditate. It can help to dissolve the ego for a spell. Yes, that is it, you should meditate.

JACK

For the rest of my life?

ARTHUR

That may not be such a long stretch.

JACK

You make a point. Okay, let's see if I can remember this...

(Jack takes a deep breath, assumes a meditation position and tries to meditate for a short while, then stops.)

This is boring as all fuck, Arthur!

ARTHUR

Since you have chosen to follow my advice to withdraw from the world, a touch of ennui is bound to creep in here and there.

JACK

Great. What do I do about that?

ARTHUR

Boredom is a worse plague on the species than most acknowledge, but it is not nearly so bad as the agony that the world and other people bring.

JACK

At least agony has some entertainment value.

ARTHUR

In a ghoulish way, perhaps.

JACK

I don't remember reading about you being bored all that much.

ARTHUR

Yes, well, that probably has a lot to do with why I never considered following my own advice.

JACK

(Slamming Arthur against a wall or something and holding him there)

You! Sick! Hypocrite! Bastard!

ARTHUR

What were you expecting, you impudent little shit? A fairy tale? I never offered you anything more than the occasional fleeting absence of pain. That is all you can hope for.

JACK

There has to be more.

ARTHUR

All there can be more of is turmoil, sorrow, disenchantment and loss, if you choose to turn back.

JACK

(Releasing Arthur)

You know what you are, Arthur? Just another excuse to pay smug, socially retarded losers like yourself to teach masturbatory mental gymnastics to spoiled little twerps who only care about drinking beer and getting their rocks off while they wait to become lawyers or investment bankers or marry rich.

ARTHUR

All of them are miserable, I \ assure you.

JACK

(While violently throwing the book far away)

Shut up! I can't believe I listened to you twice in one lifetime!

(As Jack leaves Arthur and lights fade on Arthur)

Now what do I do?

ARTHUR

The occasional fleeting absence of pain, Jack. That is all you can hope for.

Exit Arthur. Jack goes first towards his office, then stops. Then he goes towards Dr. Swenson's office, then stops. Then he goes towards Bernie's bed. Lights up on nursing home room.

JACK

You know, you never even thanked me for becoming the man who could justify your disgust. And I did it all for you. If that's not love, what is, eh?

(Pause)

Be well, Bernie.

JACK (CONT'D)

Lights out on nursing home room. Jack takes a deep sigh and goes wearily and warily to home. Gabe is there, alone, startled to see him.

Dad?

GABE

Where's Mom?

JACK

She said \ you...

GABE

What, is she out spending my money again?

JACK

I think so.

GABE

Where this time?

JACK

Duane Reade. Her doctor called in some medicine.

GABE

Hunh.

JACK

She said she'd be right back.

GABE

There is a very long, uncomfortable silence.

Do you think I'm a douche bag?

JACK

What?

GABE

It's okay, you can be honest.

JACK

I dunno.

GABE

JACK

Well, to the extent that you do think that, it's okay... Because I *am* a douche bag. So don't feel bad about it, okay?

Okay.

GABE

Another uncomfortable silence.

JACK

Do you think I think *you're* a douche bag?

GABE

I *know* you do.

JACK

Well, to the extent that I do think that... it's not because you really are... It has nothing do with anything you did or the way you are, so don't feel bad about that either, okay?

GABE

Why do you think I am one, if I'm not?

JACK

It's just that, to the extent you're *not* one, it pisses me off, even though it shouldn't. I mean, I should be proud since you're the first guy in our family who ever wasn't one, right? But I can't be, because I myself *am* one, see what I'm saying?

GABE

I guess so.

JACK

But don't you ever be one, even though it pisses me off. Don't even think about it, okay?

GABE

Okay.

Another uncomfortable silence.

JACK

Gabe, if you go to law school, I'm gonna have to kill you.

GABE

Are you... you're not being \ serious, right?

JACK

This all ends with me. Don't do it, Gabe. Don't even think about it, okay?

GABE

Okay.

Enter Robin. She and Jack lock eyes, intensely and hold it throughout the following dialogue.

JACK

So, now that we've cleared the air about that, why don't you take the football and your cell to the Park. I'll meet up with you in about an hour.

GABE

Really?

JACK

Yes.

GABE

Where in the Park?

JACK

Just pick a place.

GABE

What kinda place?

JACK

Where we can throw.

GABE

What am I supposed to do in the Park by myself for a whole hour?

JACK

Practice.

GABE

Throwing the football? All by my \ self?

ROBIN

Gabe, so help me God.

I'm *going*.

GABE

Gabe grabs the football, perhaps a light jacket, and begins to exit.

Cell phone.

JACK

Okay.

GABE

Gabe comes back, finds his cell phone and exits.

Man, you still know how to get a guy's attention when you want to.

JACK

How so?

ROBIN

"I ache for you?"

JACK

Oh, that. I didn't mean it that way.

ROBIN

Seriously?

JACK

I'm sorry, I was just trying to say... trying to show some empathy, you know... because of everything that's going on.

ROBIN

Oh... okay...

JACK

(He sighs.)

You sure you didn't mean it that way? Cuz it sounded really...

ROBIN

Did it have an effect on you?

JACK

"I ache for you?" What do you think?

ROBIN

Well... you have an odd way of showing it, disappearing off the face of the earth.

JACK

Robin...

ROBIN

Are you over this effect it had on you, or does it linger?

JACK

What are you getting at?

ROBIN

Nothing. Just curious.

JACK

Are you hitting on me?

ROBIN

What do you think?

JACK

I don't know, Robin. I've had a long week, cut me some slack.

ROBIN

(Holding out her arms)

Come here.

Jack approaches Robin, falls into her arms. They hug, then the following dialogue occurs while Jack partakes of Robin, especially savoring the delicacies that he and Arthur discussed: her hair, mouth, ears, neck/shoulders, clavicles. Robin submits and relishes every second of it.

JACK

How's Morty gonna take this?

ROBIN

Take what?

JACK

You know... us. I'd better not find his ear in our mailbox.

ROBIN
Don't flatter yourself, this is just a temporary physical thing.

JACK
A fleeting absence of pain?

ROBIN
What?

JACK
Nothing.

ROBIN
Are they really going to disbar you?

JACK
They sure as hell better.

ROBIN
We have enough saved up for a while, don't we?

JACK
No. I gave it all away.

ROBIN
(Laughing)
That's good...

JACK
I didn't really, though.

ROBIN
That's good...

JACK
I was going to tomorrow.

ROBIN
(Stopping the action)
Seriously? Why?

JACK
It was all Arthur's idea.

ROBIN
He's been a wonderful influence on you.

He means well.

JACK

Jack begins to go to town on her clavicles as if they were the most delicious spare ribs he ever tasted.

Caroline's got nothing on you.

JACK (CONT'D)

Who's she?

ROBIN

What, are you jealous?

JACK

Yeah, right.

ROBIN

(They continue for a while, then she abruptly stops the action.)

Who is she, Jack?

JACK

A very lustful young lady with perfect clavicles... from what I can tell.

ROBIN

From what you can tell?

JACK

Well, I mean, she's been dead for over a hundred years.

ROBIN

God, you are...

JACK

An impudent little shit?

ROBIN

Yes.

JACK

You love it.

ROBIN

Yeah, right.

They continue. The phone rings. They ignore it. It goes to the message machine.

ROBIN (PRE-RECORDED, ON MESSAGE MACHINE)

Hi. This is the Burns residence. Please leave your message after the beep.

Beep.

DR. KREDITOR (ON MESSAGE MACHINE)

Hello. This is Dr. Yuri Kreditor.

Jack and Robin stop, frozen. They both had forgotten about this.

DR. KREDITOR (CONT'D)

I'm looking for Jack Burns. I understand that he doesn't live there anymore, but he's not answering his cell. If you know where he is, please have him call me at the office if it's within the next fifteen minutes or so at 212-684-2490 or after that on my cell at 917-432-7160. Any time up till... around eleven, I guess, would be fine. I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Click. Jack and Robin stare at each other for a while in silence.

JACK

Hmmm.

ROBIN

(Putting his head on her chest)

Hmmm.

JACK

(Lifting his head and looking at her)

Robin my darling, I do believe your heart is playing Ravel's Bolero.

ROBIN

(While putting his head back down)

Listen again.

JACK

Ah...

END OF PLAY.

Notes on Legal Terminology

These short explanations of some of the legal terms are only inserted for the benefit of the actors/director, but the audience doesn't need to know what these terms mean.

An “earn-out” is an agreement to make an extra payment of purchase price to the seller sometime down the road if the company being purchased does well.

A “letter of intent” is a several page letter that spells out in relatively plain English the key terms of a business transaction, which both parties to the transaction often sign first to make sure they are “on the same page” before proceeding with the drafting of the much longer, expensive, legalese-laden formal documentation. The letter of intent is usually not legally binding, but deviating from the terms of the letter of intent is not common and is considered extremely bad ethical form that would likely damage the lawyer's and his/her client's reputation and standing in the business/legal community.

A “working capital adjustment” is a common feature in business acquisitions, which effectively prevents the seller from manipulating and siphoning all of the cash out of the company (such as by collecting amounts owed to the company that aren't yet due, delaying paying the company's bills and paying the current owners of the company a big dividend) right before the sale occurs.

A “sub” is shorthand for a subsidiary corporation which is wholly-owned by one of the main companies in the deal. “Subs” are sometimes established under Bermuda law for tax reasons.